

Characteristic 6

Developing skills for work

A characteristic when teaching pupils with additional needs is that pupils acquire, develop, and secure skills and knowledge from a range of experiences, to enable them to seek and maintain meaningful employment. *(In this document, the context of work is set around food.)*

Overview

- Staff plan activities and seek out opportunities and experiences around food and drink to promote developing pupil-centred skills for work.
- Staff build pupils' confidence and competence in order to fulfil their individual potential.
- Staff plan activities that use skills for work as a context to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.
- Staff plan activities that promote recognition and familiarisation from home to school and the wider world, including meaningful employment.
- Staff enable pupils to follow accredited courses or qualifications, with a focus on skills for work, where appropriate.
- Staff ensure that provisions have been made for pupils with physical disabilities, food allergies, intolerances and/or other dietary requirements, including sensory issues, so they can participate safely in work experience and external skills development activities.
- Staff use positive reinforcement and motivate pupils to become familiar and more competent with new skills, leading to an increase in pupils' own confidence, interest and motivation.



Caroline Parsons

Square Food
Foundation

Bristol, England



At Square Food Foundation we understand the confidence, pride and dignity that come from meaningful work in a real-life business. Our community kitchen buzzes with young people with all kinds of backgrounds and educational profiles, getting involved in a range of food-related activities tailored to their interests and strengths.

Years of experience show us that learners with additional needs can be valuable, reliable members of a catering team working at events or in professional kitchens in a wide variety of roles. All that is needed for this to happen is the right support for that individual and for expectations to be clear. It's amazing to see young people flourish through being given responsibility for specific tasks; we've asked them to do all kinds of things from making canapés to handing plates around, and they often surprise themselves and us with how well they rise to the occasion. Some young people will gain much job satisfaction from repetitive food preparation tasks, or from the vital role of washing up, and that is fine.

Hilary Long, the mother of Joshua who attended the Square Food Foundation, says that after cooking at a number of events, her son is now embarking on a How to be a Chef course, during which he will not only learn the technical skills that he needs for work, but also employability skills such as teamwork, reliability and resilience. He is looking forward to some work experience to find out what sort of hospitality and catering setting he would thrive in most.

CAROLINE'S TIPS

1. It's very important to build upon a young person's individual interests and strengths when choosing how to support them getting involved in a working kitchen.
2. Take some time to research local food businesses and build contacts in this community.
3. Preparation is key prior to an event or work placement.

Putting the characteristic into practice

Planning

In practice, staff:

- highlight different employment opportunities in 'food', e.g. catering and hospitality, bakers, fishmongers, green grocers, farming, manufacturing (small and large scale);
- plan a range of activities that develop skills for work;
- enable pupils to recognise and become familiar with equipment used in the workplace;
- organise visits, trips and experiences to broaden pupils' understanding of the world of work;

- engage with those that can help broaden pupils' employment opportunities, e.g. local charities and hospitality organisations;
- provide opportunities for pupils to study for accredited courses or qualifications to support future employability.

Other examples:



Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Organise trips to food and drink outlets such as cafés, restaurants and leisure centres so that pupils can familiarise themselves with the different types of roles.
- Organise visits to school from people working in 'food' to broaden pupils' knowledge of the roles available to them, e.g. café owner, chef, farmer, baker, hotelier.
- Organise trips to 'world of work' play centres so pupils can role-play different types of work.

- Organise for pupils to study for a work-based qualification in food hygiene and safety, if appropriate.

Other examples:

Putting the characteristic into practice

Breaking down barriers and building confidence

In practice, staff:

- build relationships with employers and community groups;
- enable pupils to develop confidence around work experience in stages, e.g. starting with observational visits, leading to supported work experience, leading to independent work experience;
- provide opportunities for pupils to engage with role models in the workplace, either face to face or virtually;

- enable pupils to learn how to dress appropriately for work.

Other examples:



Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Invite parents/carers who work in 'food' into school to speak to the pupils about their job.
- Create a display with photos of people in the world of work that are like them.
- Role-play getting ready for work using examples of uniforms or work clothes that pupils may be required to wear in a work environment, e.g. chef whites, service aprons, tabards, tunics.

Other examples:

Develop skills for working with food and drink

In practice, staff:

- provide opportunities for pupils to:
 - recognise and use kitchen equipment;
 - prepare hot and cold drinks;
 - plan, prepare and cook a variety of ingredients to create dishes;

- serve hot and cold drinks, snacks and meals.

Other examples:



Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Show real-life pictures of equipment used at home/school and those that pupils will see in a catering kitchen to enable them to recognise an industrial version.
- Where possible, enable pupils to experience and use catering equipment, e.g. in the school kitchen or an on-site café.

- Create opportunities for pupils to plan, prepare, make and serve hot and cold drinks, snacks and meals to others, e.g. lunch for pupils and staff, a coffee morning or tea party for parents/carers.

Other examples:

For further details see [Characteristic 9 Developing practical food skills](#).

Putting the characteristic into practice

Knowing how to work in a safe and hygienic way

In practice, staff:

- teach pupils about health and safety in the workplace, particularly the safe use of kitchen and cleaning equipment where appropriate;
- teach pupils about hygiene in the workplace, particularly personal hygiene.

Other examples:



Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Work with school catering or cleaning staff to help pupils recognise the various safety signs and symbols that they may come across in a workplace and what they mean, e.g. prohibition, mandatory, warning, safe condition and fire equipment.
- Explain, model/demonstrate and repeat health and safety routines regularly, e.g. not running/shouting, safe use of hot or sharp equipment, getting ready to cook.
- Encourage pupils to clean an area of a kitchen or food preparation space following simple instructions and using basic equipment, e.g. wiping a work surface with a clean cloth, moving onto more complex instructions, e.g. sweep and then clean the floor using a mop, bucket and cleaning product.

Other examples:

For further details see [Characteristics 5 Developing skills for independent living](#) and [8 Establishing good food hygiene and safety practices](#).

Working with others

In practice, staff:

- provide opportunities for pupils to:
 - know how to act appropriately in a workplace situation:
 - work with others, e.g. with a member of staff or in a team;
 - communicate with others;
 - follow instructions from others;

- give instructions to others;
- ask for, accept, or offer help.

Other examples:



Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Pupils work in pairs to lay a table for a meal with one pupil giving instructions and the other pupil following them. The pupils then swap leader and follower roles to complete a different task.
- Pupils work as a team to plan and run a tea party for parents/carers.
- Encourage pupils to support each other and offer help if they see it is needed.

Other examples:

Putting the characteristic into practice

Literacy and numeracy

In practice, staff:

- provide opportunities for pupils to:
 - read, write and review menus;
 - take food and drink orders and relay them to other pupils or members of staff;
 - calculate a bill, where appropriate;
 - take money and give change;

- observe that bills can be paid by card or contactless through a smart phone.

Other examples:



Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Role-play a café scenario with pupils and staff where some pupils are the kitchen staff and others are waiting/front of house and then swap over.
- Organise trips to catering outlets for pupils to practise reading menus, placing a food or drink order and paying a bill either independently, or with support.

Other examples:

Making decisions and solving problems

In practice, staff:

- plan activities where pupils have to make decisions;
- help pupils to recognise when they have a problem;
- suggest sources of help, e.g. a colleague, mentor, supervisor;

- enable pupils to identify a solution.

Other examples:



Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Provide pupils with a list of tasks that need to be completed in order to get a café ready to open for lunch service. Ask the pupils to decide the order in which the tasks should be completed so that the café can open on time.
- Discuss different scenarios that pupils might experience whilst at work and identify what the solution might be or who they could ask for help, e.g. how to deal with a difficult or rude customer.

- Provide pupils going on work experience with assistance, help or time-out cards that they can show a supervisor if they need help.

- Sunflower lanyards, supported by the Royal National Institute of Blind People, the National Autistic Society, Action on Hearing Loss and other charities, can be worn by pupils to let others know that they have a hidden disability.

Other examples:

Note: It is acknowledged that there are other skills for work that should be developed to support pupils with gaining meaningful employment. However, the focus of this guide is food and nutrition and therefore, the emphasis in this Characteristic is developing skills for working in 'food'.

Putting the characteristic into practice

Exemplary practice

Governor/head teacher/senior leadership team

- Ensure that suitable provision is made for pupils to develop skills for work, such as the world of food and drink employment.
- Provide suitable and appropriate spaces for pupils to develop skills for work, e.g. kitchens, school canteen, table service.
- Enable pupils to follow accredited courses or qualifications, with a focus on skills for work.

Curriculum lead/coordinator

- Enable pupils to develop skills for work, and relate experiences in school to the world of work through trips and visits and talks from role models, e.g. chefs.

Classroom teacher/teaching assistant

- Create a display of famous chefs that they may feel affinity with, e.g. Michael Caines, Scott Garthwaite, Christine Hà, Ronnie Murray.

- Set up a café in the classroom to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, including reading and writing menus, calculating costs, and handling money.
- Use a variety of resources and equipment to inspire an interest in working in a food and/or drink setting, such as posters, videos, menus, and pieces of kitchen equipment.

Other examples:



A list of useful websites to support this Characteristic can be found on page 74